



Submission from the Foodprint Melbourne research project

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26 July 2024

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Executive summary

The key messages and recommendations from our submission are as follows:

- Victoria's food system is increasingly being affected by **shocks and stresses**, which contribute to **rising food prices** and **growing food insecurity**
- A **'food systems approach'** is required to promote food security that considers the whole food system from farm to fork
- A **'whole of government' food security strategy** should be developed for Victoria, which is grounded in a legislative framework that includes the human right to food

Recommendations

- Develop a **'whole of government' food security strategy for Victoria**. The strategy should address all six dimensions of food security and should adopt a 'food systems' approach. The strategy should establish clear accountability for addressing food security across government departments and levels of government
- Appoint a **Minister for Food**, located in the Victorian Department of Premier and Cabinet, who would be accountable for the development of the food security strategy for Victoria
- Introduce a **Food Security Bill** (the Bill) to establish mechanisms of Ministerial accountability for food security, support cross-portfolio collaboration, and legislate governance and reporting arrangements for the preparation of a food security strategy for Victoria
- Build capacity among Victorian policymakers about what it means to adopt a **'food systems' approach to promoting food security**
- **Regular (at least biannual) monitoring of food insecurity is needed** at state and local level using a validated tool such as the USDA Household Food Security Survey Module. This should include gathering data about children as well as adults
- Develop a **'whole of government' approach to planning resilient food systems** as part of a food security strategy for Victoria
- Strengthen the state policy focus on the **long-term resilience of food supplies** to promote food security in the face of shocks and stresses
- There is a need for more in-depth qualitative research into the **lived experience** of people experiencing food insecurity in Victoria, including children
- Develop a 'whole of government' strategy for food security in Victoria, which is **grounded in the human right to food**. The strategy should include targets for implementing the human right to food, with regular tracking and reporting of progress against the targets
- Provide **policy guidance** from state government to Victorian local governments on developing food strategies that recognise the right to food and have regard to state government targets
- Legislate the human right to food in Victoria by amending the **Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities** to include the right to food as part of the right to an adequate standard of living
- Introduce a state government program of **universal free school lunches** in Victorian schools
- Fund local government and civil society initiatives that realise **dignified access** to healthy culturally appropriate food in collaboration with local communities

1. Introduction

The Foodprint Melbourne research project at the University of Melbourne is pleased to respond to the invitation from the Parliament of Victoria Legislative Council Legal and Social Issues Committee for submissions to the *Inquiry into food security in Victoria*.

Our submission draws on findings from the *Victorian Food Resilience Planning Project*, which focuses on supporting Victorian stakeholders to take action to strengthen the resilience of the state's food system to shocks and stresses.

The Victorian Food Resilience Planning Project is the most recent phase of the Foodprint Melbourne research project. Further details and references can be found in the publications from the Foodprint Melbourne research project, which are available from the project website - <https://science.unimelb.edu.au/foodprint-melbourne/publications>

2. Foodprint Melbourne

Foodprint Melbourne is a research project that investigates ways of strengthening the resilience of Melbourne's food system to increase equitable access to healthy, culturally appropriate foods and to promote sustainable food production and consumption for current and future generations.

The Foodprint Melbourne research project began in 2015 and is based in the School of Agriculture, Food and Ecosystem Sciences (SAFES) in the Faculty of Science at the University of Melbourne.

The project is funded by Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation and project partners include City of Melbourne, City of Greater Bendigo, City of Whittlesea, Merri-bek City Council, Mornington Peninsula Shire, Wyndham City, Community Information & Support Victoria (CISVic), Foodbank Victoria, Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV), North East Local Food Strategy Action Group, Open Food Network, Victorian Council of Social Services (VCOSS) and the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation (VicHealth).

3. What is food security?

A key question for this Inquiry is what is meant by food security. Food security is commonly understood to exist when, “all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary preferences and needs for an active and healthy life”.¹

Food security has multiple dimensions, including access, availability, utilisation, stability, agency and sustainability (see table 1). The dimensions of sustainability and agency were proposed by the High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition of the Committee on World Food Security (HLPE) in 2020.²

While food access is the specific focus of this Inquiry, people’s access to nutritious food is influenced by other dimensions of food security, and it is important that interactions between the multiple dimensions of food security are recognised and considered in developing policy solutions. We draw the Committee’s attention, in particular, to the influence of shocks and stresses to food systems on rising food prices and growing food insecurity (the dimension of *stability*), and the need for an integrated policy approach to strengthen the resilience of Victoria’s food system to shocks and stresses.³ This submission also highlights the importance of *agency* in shaping dignified solutions to address food insecurity that give people control and choice over their food provisioning and that reduce barriers to accessing support.⁴

Table 1: The Six dimensions of food security⁵

Dimension of food security	Summary
Availability	Having a quantity and quality of food available in the food supply (through domestic production or imports) to meet dietary and cultural needs.
Access (economic, social and physical)	Having the financial means to acquire food for an adequate diet in a way that doesn’t compromise other basic needs.
Utilisation	The ability to use food to safely prepare meals that meet nutritional needs through access to adequate storage, equipment, clean water etc.
Stability	Ensuring food security in the event of sudden shocks (e.g. climate events, economic shocks or conflicts) or ongoing stresses (e.g. drought).
Agency	Having the capacity to act independently to make choices about what we eat and to participate in the policy decisions that shape food systems.
Sustainability	Ensuring that food needs for the current generation are met without compromising the food needs of future generations, and contributing to long term regeneration of natural, social and economic systems.

¹ HLPE (2020) *Food security and nutrition: building a global narrative towards 2030*. A report by the High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition of the Committee on World Food Security, Rome.

² HLPE (2020) As above.

³ FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO (2023) *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2023*. Urbanization, agrifood systems transformation and healthy diets across the rural–urban continuum. Rome: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cc3017en>.

⁴ Clapp, J., Moseley, W., Burlingame, B. and Termine, P. (2022) Viewpoint: The case for a six-dimensional food security framework. *Food Policy* 106, 102164.

⁵ This table appears in Carey, R., Murphy, M. and Behen, T. (2024) *Planning a resilient food system for Victoria*. The University of Melbourne <https://doi.org/10.46580/124375> and is adapted from HLPE (2020) As above.

A food systems approach to policy and governance for food security

Food security is the outcome of a complex food system, which includes all the people and activities involved in producing, processing, distributing, retailing, consuming and disposing of food, and the interactions between them. It also includes the infrastructure, natural resources and other inputs that support those activities.⁶ Food security is not only influenced by food system interactions, but by the functioning of other systems that food systems depend on, including telecommunications, finance, transport and energy.⁷

Food security is influenced by decisions taken across many different government policy portfolios, including environment, transport, water, trade, social services and health.⁸ If decisions in these policy portfolios are taken without regard to their impact on food systems, it can lead to unintended and adverse outcomes for food security. An integrated ‘food systems’ approach is therefore needed to promote food security in Victoria, which includes the development of a ‘whole of government’ food security strategy for the state.

The need for a ‘whole of government’ approach to food security was recognised by the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Agriculture in the final report from the *Inquiry into food security in Australia*, which recommended the development of “a comprehensive National Food Plan providing for the food security, including nutritional security, of the nation and its people”.⁹ The NSW Legislative Assembly Committee on Environment and Planning also recommended that an overarching food system plan should be developed to promote food security in NSW.¹⁰

The development of a ‘whole of government’ food security strategy for Victoria should be grounded in a legislative framework that establishes clear accountability for the development, implementation and monitoring of the strategy. The responsibilities and accountabilities of government ministers for some dimensions of food security (see section 3) are currently unclear. The main policy focus in Victoria is on the food security dimension of *availability*, particularly increasing agricultural production for export. The policy focus on *access* to food is limited. Indeed, there is no clear responsibility or accountability at any level of government for ensuring that all Victorians have adequate access to food, and this is a barrier to effective policy action.¹¹ A Minister for Food should be appointed in Victoria who is responsible for the food security of Victorians.

A legislative framework is needed in Victoria that specifies the responsibilities and accountabilities of state and local government for different dimensions of food security. Scotland’s *Good Food Nation Act 2022* is an example of such legislation. Importantly, this legislation outlines principles and governance

⁶ Draws on a definition in HLPE (2020) *Food security and nutrition: building a global narrative towards 2030*. A report by the High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition of the Committee on World Food Security, Rome.

⁷ Ingram, J. (2019) Food system models. In Lawrence, M. and Friel, S. (eds) *Healthy and sustainable food systems*. Taylor and Francis.

⁸ Carey, R., Murphy, M. and Behen, T. (2024) As above.

⁹ House of Representatives Standing Committee on Agriculture (2023) *Australian food story: Feeding the nation and beyond: Inquiry into food security in Australia*. Canberra: Parliament of Australia.

¹⁰ NSW Legislative Assembly Committee on Environment and Planning (2022) *Food production and supply in NSW. Report 3/57*. November 2022.

¹¹ Carey, R., Murphy, M. and Behen, T. (2024) As above.

mechanisms for embedding a food systems approach to promoting food security within the machinery of government. It also establishes accountability for the development of Scotland's *National Good Food Nation Plan*. The importance of clear accountability for the development and implementation of a 'whole of government' food security plan is evident from an earlier attempt to develop a 'whole of government' Food Strategy for Victoria in 2010-11.¹² The strategy developed was not released publicly or implemented, and lessons should be learned from the failure of this initiative.

Recommendations

- Develop a **'whole of government' food security strategy for Victoria**. The strategy should address all six dimensions of food security and should adopt a 'food systems' approach. The strategy should establish clear accountability for addressing food security across government departments and levels of government
- Appoint a **Minister for Food**, located in the Victorian Department of Premier and Cabinet, who would be accountable for the development of the food security strategy for Victoria
- Introduce a **Food Security Bill** (the Bill) to establish mechanisms of Ministerial accountability for food security, support cross-portfolio collaboration, and legislate governance and reporting arrangements for the preparation of a food security strategy for Victoria
- Build capacity among Victorian policymakers about what it means to adopt a **'food systems' approach to promoting food security**

4. Drivers of food insecurity in Victoria

Food insecurity exists on a continuum from being worried about running out of food to running out of food and experiencing hunger.¹³ The prevalence of food insecurity is increasing in Victoria. The 2022 Victorian Population Health Survey shows that 8.1% of Victorian adults had experienced 'severe food insecurity' in the past 12 months (that is, they had run out of food at times and been unable to afford to buy more)¹⁴ a 40% increase from 2020 when the prevalence was 5.8%.¹⁵

The drivers of food insecurity are complex.¹⁶ However, food insecurity has its roots in poverty and disadvantage.¹⁷ People on low incomes experience higher rates of food insecurity,¹⁸ and they also spend

¹² The development of the Food Strategy for Victoria was led by Regional Development Victoria and supported by a State Government Food Inter-Departmental Committee. See Regional Development Australia (2010) Annual report 2009-10, p33.

¹³ FAO (2017) The food insecurity experience scale: Measuring food insecurity through people's experiences. Available: <https://www.fao.org/3/i7835e/i7835e.pdf> (accessed 28 November 2022).

¹⁴ VAHI (2024) Victorian Population Health Survey 2022. Victorian Agency for Health Information Available: <https://vahi.vic.gov.au/reports/victorianpopulation-health-survey> (accessed 1 July 2024).

¹⁵ VAHI (2022) Victorian Population Health Survey 2020 – Dashboards. Victorian Agency for Health Information. Available: <https://vahi.vic.gov.au/reports/population-health/victorian-population-health-survey-2020-dashboards> (accessed 1 July 2024).

¹⁶ See Murphy, M., Carey, R., and Alexandra, L. (2022) *The resilience of Melbourne's food system to climate and pandemic shocks*. University of Melbourne, Australia. <https://doi.org/10.46580/124370>.

¹⁷ Godrich, S., Barbour, L. and Lindberg, R. (2021) Problems, policy and politics – perspectives of public health leaders on food insecurity and human rights in Australia. *BMC Public Health* 21: 1132.

¹⁸ NCOSS (2018) *Access to healthy food: NCOSS cost of living report*. Sydney: NSW Council of Social Service.

a higher proportion of their disposable income on food.¹⁹ Disadvantaged population groups experience higher levels of food insecurity in Victoria. For example, in 2022, almost one in five people who were unemployed (18%) experienced severe food insecurity in Victoria, while more than a third of people renting in public housing (34.9%), and a quarter of people renting in community housing (25.1%), reported severe food insecurity.²⁰ The prevalence of food insecurity also varies across rural and regional areas of Victoria and by the socioeconomic status of geographic areas. In 2022, around 12% of people living in rural Victoria experienced severe food insecurity, compared with around 7% in metropolitan areas.²¹ In 2020, food insecurity in the metropolitan local government area of Bayside was around 2%, while the rural local government area of Central Goldfields had food insecurity prevalence of 13%.²²

Little data is available about the prevalence of mild (or marginal) to moderate food insecurity in Victoria, as monitoring of food insecurity in the state has typically focused on measuring only severe food insecurity. However, this approach underestimates the scale of the problem and is out of step with international best practice.²³ The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) tracks progress against Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 2 'Zero Hunger' by measuring the proportion of a population that experiences *moderate or severe* food insecurity. People experiencing 'moderate food insecurity' face uncertain access to food and need to take steps to avoid running out, such as skipping meals, and eating cheaper and less healthy foods.²⁴ Regular monitoring of food security is needed in Victoria using an instrument that measures varying degrees of food insecurity, such as the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Household Food Security Survey Module (HFFSM).

Regular monitoring of food insecurity is becoming particularly important in Victoria, because of the impacts of more frequent and severe shocks to food systems on food prices and food insecurity. Victoria has experienced multiple climate shocks over the past five years, which have disrupted food supply chains, including bushfires and floods. Global food system shocks, such as the COVID-19 pandemic and Russia's invasion of Ukraine, have also contributed to rising food prices.²⁵

Victoria is likely to experience more frequent and severe extreme weather events in future due to climate change.²⁶ An integrated policy approach is needed to build the long-term resilience of the state's food system to any future shock or stress. All levels of government need to be engaged in *food resilience planning* – that is, taking actions to strengthen the resilience of food systems from farm to fork. This should involve all relevant policy portfolios, including agriculture, land use planning, water and waste

¹⁹ McKay, F., Bastian, A. and Lindberg, R. (2021) Exploring the response of the Victorian emergency and community food sector to the COVID-19 pandemic. *Journal of Hunger and Environmental Nutrition* 16 (4): 447-446.

²⁰ VAHI (2024) As above

²¹ VAHI (2024) As above

²² VAHI (2022) As above

²³ McKechnie, R. et al. (2018) As above.

²⁴ FAO (2024) *Hunger and food insecurity*. Available: <https://www.fao.org/hunger/en/> (accessed 3 April 2024).

²⁵ Murphy, M., Carey, R., & Alexandra, L. (2023) Building the resilience of agri-food systems to compounding shocks and stresses: A case study from Melbourne, Australia. *Frontiers in Sustainable Food Systems*, 7. doi:10.3389/fsufs.2023.1130978

²⁶ Timbal, B., Ekstrom, M., Fiddes, S. L., Grose, M., Kirono, D. G. C., Lim, E., Lucas, C. and Wilson, L. (2016) *Climate change science and Victoria*. Bureau Research Report No. 014. Bureau of Meteorology. Melbourne, Australia.

(see section 3). Food resilience planning should prepare for climate, pandemic and other shocks to food systems and for their interactions with other underlying environmental stresses.²⁷

Recommendations

- **Regular (at least biannual) monitoring of food insecurity is needed** at state and local level using a validated tool such as the USDA Household Food Security Survey Module. This should include gathering data about children as well as adults
- Develop a **'whole of government' approach to planning resilient food systems** as part of a food security strategy for Victoria
- Strengthen the state policy focus on the **long-term resilience of food supplies** to promote food security in the face of shocks and stresses

5. Impacts of food insecurity in Victoria

Food insecurity is associated with a range of physical and mental health impacts. In high income countries, food insecurity is associated with overweight and obesity,^{28 29} diabetes,³⁰ and cardiovascular disease.³¹ Food insecurity is also associated with poorer mental health status.³² Studies point to associations between food insecurity and specific mental health conditions such as depression and stress.³³

A recent review found that food insecurity was associated with psychological distress among populations from low, middle and high income countries, and across a range of population groups, including adults of all ages and tertiary students.³⁴ Qualitative research in the United Kingdom into the experience of being food insecure also suggests that the mental health impacts of food insecurity and hunger can be understood as a type of trauma, which researchers have described as 'hunger trauma'.³⁵ There is a need for more in-depth research into the experiences of adults and children of being food insecure in Victoria.

²⁷ Carey, R., Murphy, M., Alexandra, L., Sheridan, J., Larsen, K. and McGill, E. (2022) *Building the resilience of Melbourne's food system – a roadmap*. University of Melbourne. <https://doi.org/10.46580/124371>

²⁸ Swinburn, B. A., Kraak, V. I., Allender, S., Atkins, V. J., Baker, P. I., Bogard, J. R., . . . Dietz, W. H. (2019). The Global Syndemic of Obesity, Undernutrition, and Climate Change: The Lancet Commission report. *Lancet*, 393 (10173), 791-846. doi:10.1016/S0140-6736(18)32822-8

²⁹ Carvajal-Aldaz, D., Cucalon, G., & Ordonez, C. (2022). Food insecurity as a risk factor for obesity: A review. *Frontiers in Nutrition*, 9. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fnut.2022.1012734>

³⁰ Levi R, Bleich SN, Seligman HK. Food Insecurity and Diabetes: Overview of Intersections and Potential Dual Solutions. *Diabetes Care*. 2023 Sep 1;46 (9):1599-1608. doi: 10.2337/dci23-0002.

³¹ Sun, Y., Liu, B., Rong, S., Du, Y., Xu, G., Snetselaar, L. G., . . . Bao, W. (2020). Food Insecurity Is Associated With Cardiovascular and All-Cause Mortality Among Adults in the United States. *Journal of the American Heart Association*, 9(19), e014629. doi:10.1161/JAHA.119.014629

³² Jones, A. D. (2017). Food Insecurity and Mental Health Status: A Global Analysis of 149 Countries. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 53(2), 264-273. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.amepre.2017.04.008>

³³ Pourmotabbed A, Moradi S, Babaei A, et al. Food insecurity and mental health: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *Public Health Nutrition*. 2020;23(10):1778-1790. doi:10.1017/S136898001900435X

³⁴ Myers, C.A. Food Insecurity and Psychological Distress: a Review of the Recent Literature. *Curr Nutr Rep* 9, 107–118 (2020). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13668-020-00309-1>

³⁵ Walker, C., Schan, H., Devlin, B., Plowman, D. and Wise, M. (2022) Hunger trauma: Understanding experiences of food insecurity and emergency food support. September 2022.

Food insecurity is associated with poorer educational outcomes. Studies have investigated how food insecurity is associated with lower educational achievement in school aged children³⁶ and university students.³⁷ An Australian study investigated associations between food insecurity and academic performance at a Victorian university and found there was poorer academic performance and greater psychological distress among food insecure students.³⁸

Social impacts of food insecurity include shame, stigma, social isolation and social exclusion. A Canadian review found that women in high income countries experience shame and stigma and social exclusions when accessing charitable food programs. It found that the dominant response to food insecurity – the provision of food through foodbanks – undermined the individual’s self-esteem, dignity and agency.³⁹ These findings are echoed in studies from high income countries including Australia⁴⁰ ⁴¹ and the United Kingdom.⁴²

Recommendations

- There is a need for more in-depth qualitative research into the **lived experience** of people experiencing food insecurity in Victoria, including children

6. Solutions for food security in Victoria

Food security in Victoria is an outcome of the entire food system. It is therefore important that solutions to promote food security focus on actions from farm to fork as part of an integrated food security strategy for the state (see section 3). This strategy should have an emphasis on strengthening the resilience of the state’s food system to shocks and stresses (see section 4).

Adopting a ‘whole of government’ approach to food security is particularly important in considering options to lower the cost of food. Downward pressure on food prices by the major supermarkets contributes to poor pay and conditions among food and farm workers and can drive food producers out

³⁶ Faight EL, Williams PL, Willows ND, Asbridge M, Veugelers PJ. The association between food insecurity and academic achievement in Canadian school-aged children. *Public Health Nutrition*. 2017; 20(15): 2778-2785

³⁷ Martinez SM, Frongillo EA, Leung C, Ritchie L. No food for thought: Food insecurity is related to poor mental health and lower academic performance among students in California’s public university system. *Journal of Health Psychology* 2020;25 (12):1930-1939. doi:10.1177/1359105318783028

³⁸ Brownfield, N., Quinn, S., Bates, G., & Thielking, M. (2023). What is eating Gilbert’s grades? Examining the impact of food insecurity and psychological distress on weighted average marks within a sample of Australian university students. *Journal of Further and Higher Education* 47 (5), 659–673. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0309877X.2023.2176203>

³⁹ Pineau, C., Williams, P. L., Brady, J., Waddington, M., & Frank, L. (2021). Exploring experiences of food insecurity, stigma, social exclusion, and shame among women in high-income countries: A narrative review. *Canadian Food Studies La Revue Canadienne Des études Sur l’alimentation*, 8(3). <https://doi.org/10.15353/cfs-rcea.v8i3.473>

⁴⁰ Lindberg, R., Lawrence, M., & Caraher, M. (2017). Kitchens and Pantries—Helping or Hindering? The Perspectives of Emergency Food Users in Victoria, Australia. *Journal of Hunger & Environmental Nutrition*, 12(1), 26-45. doi:10.1080/19320248.2016.1175397

⁴¹ McKay, F. H., McKenzie, H., & Lindberg, R. (2022). Stigma and emergency and community food assistance: ‘But... beggars can’t be choosers’. *Journal of Poverty and Social Justice*, 30(2), 171-191. doi:10.1332/175982721x16461506229420

⁴² Garthwaite, K. (2016). Stigma, shame and ‘people like us’: an ethnographic study of foodbank use in the UK. *Journal of Poverty and Social Justice*, 24(3), 277-289. doi:10.1332/175982716x14721954314922

of business.^{43, 44} Food industry workers are often casually employed, and working under poor pay and conditions,^{45, 46, 47} which puts them at risk of food insecurity (see section 4). Policy options to promote affordable food should be considered through a lens of equity and food security for all participants in food supply chains.

Victoria's food security strategy should be grounded in the right to food, which is a human right under international law.⁴⁸ A number of Victorian local governments have adopted policy statements that address the right to food, including Banyule City Council,⁴⁹ Cardinia Shire⁵⁰ and Merri-bek City Council.⁵¹ The right to adequate food is, "the right of every individual, alone or in community with others, to have physical and economic access at all times to sufficient, adequate and culturally acceptable food that is produced and consumed sustainably, preserving access to food for future generations".⁵² The right to food relates to both the consumption *and production* of food, and to the rights of future as well as current generations.

The dominant approach to addressing food insecurity in Victoria, provision of emergency food relief, does not ensure the human right to food.⁵³ Emergency food relief services rely mainly on donations of surplus food from the food industry. The food provided is therefore often highly processed, of low nutritional value and may not meet people's personal and cultural food preferences.⁵⁴ There are also barriers to accessing food relief. Less than 40% of households surveyed by Foodbank, who were experiencing food insecurity, had accessed food relief in the previous 12 months.⁵⁵ Barriers to access include feelings of shame and stigma in using the services.

⁴³ Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade (2017) *Hidden in Plain Sight: An inquiry into establishing a Modern Slavery Act in Australia*. Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra.

⁴⁴ Underhill, E., & Rimmer, M. (2017) Private Governance, State Regulation and Employment Standards: How Political Factors Shape their Nexus in Australian Horticulture. *Relations Industrielles / Industrial Relations*, 72(1), 33–55. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/26301394>

⁴⁵ Fair Work Commission (2021). *Decision - Application to vary the Horticulture Award 2021*, AM2020/104. Commonwealth of Australia.

⁴⁶ DEDJTR (2016) *Victorian Inquiry into the Labour Hire Industry and Insecure Work - Final Report*. Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport & Resources, Melbourne, Australia

⁴⁷ Jones, N.A., Bellamy, J., Bellotti, W., Ross, H., van Bommel, S., and Liu, Y. (2022). A Shock to the System: What the COVID-19 Pandemic Reveals About Australia's Food Systems and Their Resilience. *Frontiers in Sustainable Food Systems* 5. doi: 10.3389/fsufs.2021.790694.

⁴⁸ Carey, R., Murphy, M. and Behen, T. (2024) As above

⁴⁹ See the Banyule City Council *Urban Food Strategy 2023-2027*

⁵⁰ See the *Cardinia Community Food Strategy and Action Plan 2018- 26*

⁵¹ See the draft *Merri-bek Food System Strategy 2024-27*

⁵² De Schutter, O. (2014) *Final Report: The transformative potential of the right to food*. Presented to the 25th Session of the UN Human Rights Council, United Nations General Assembly.

⁵³ Carey, R., Murphy, M. and Behen, T. (2024) As above.

⁵⁴ Lindberg, R., Whelan, J., Lawrence, M., Gold, L. and Friel, S. (2015) Still serving hot soup? Two hundred years of a charitable food sector in Australia: a narrative review. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health* 39 (4): 358-365.

⁵⁵ Foodbank (2022) *Foodbank hunger report 2022*. October 2022. <https://reports.foodbank.org.au/foodbank-hunger-report-2022/> (accessed 28 November 2022).

The human right to food emphasises, “the right to feed oneself with dignity”; that is, to have control over one’s own food provisioning in a way that meets personal and cultural food preferences.⁵⁶ There is a growing focus on ‘food with dignity’ approaches to address food insecurity that support realisation of the human right to food.⁵⁷ Food with dignity approaches aim to give people experiencing food insecurity more control over their own food provisioning, provide them with choices about what they eat, and involve them in the design of services.⁵⁸ Food with dignity approaches to addressing food insecurity can include social supermarkets, community-based markets, voucher schemes that empower people to choose their own food, and community gardens that support people to grow their own food.

Legislative and policy measures are also needed to address rising food insecurity in Victoria. There is currently a lack of accountability within the Victorian government for ensuring that all Victorians have access to adequate food, and this undermines effective policy action to address food insecurity within the state (see section 3). A legislative framework is needed to establish clear responsibilities and accountabilities for addressing food insecurity, underpinned by legislation on the human right to food. A universal free school meals program could form a central building block of such an approach.⁵⁹

Recommendations

- Develop a ‘whole of government’ strategy for food security in Victoria, which **is grounded in the human right to food**. The strategy should include targets for implementing the human right to food, with regular tracking and reporting of progress against the targets
- Provide **policy guidance** from state government to Victorian local governments on developing food strategies that recognise the right to food and have regard to state government targets
- Legislate the human right to food in Victoria by amending the **Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities** to include the right to food as part of the right to an adequate standard of living
- Introduce a state government program of **universal free school lunches** in Victorian schools
- Fund local government and civil society initiatives that realise **dignified access** to healthy culturally appropriate food in collaboration with local communities

⁵⁶ FAO (2022) *The right to food*. Available <https://www.fao.org/right-to-food/resources/resources-detail/en/c/1238127> (accessed 22 July 2024).

⁵⁷ Carey, R., Murphy, M. and Behen, T. (2024) As above, p45.

⁵⁸ For more information about ‘food with dignity’ principles, see Carey, R., Murphy, M. and Behen, T. (2024) As above, p46.

⁵⁹ Carey, R., Murphy, M. and Behen, T. (2024) As above, p35 - 45.